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ABSTRACT

Seventy-five male Ph.D. candidates were interviewed individually to determine which parent seemed more influential as an identification model. The interview also yielded judgments as to which parent offered more emotional intimacy and which parent was dominant in the family. A chi-square analysis between these characteristics and judged identification model yielded the following significant findings ($p < .05$): (1) subjects were judged similar to the parent they recall as having provided a closer emotional relationship; and (2) subjects were judged similar to the parent who is remembered as being more dominant in the family. In addition to supporting and extending earlier findings regarding the influence of nurturance and power characteristics on identification, the present data suggest that emotional intimacy and dominance are characteristics whose reinforcement value for adults depends in part on the culturally defined sex role of the model. (Author)

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CHILD REARING ANTECEDENTS OF IDENTIFICATION MODEL IN YOUNG ADULT MEN: DOMINANCE AND EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

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Identification is the tendency of an individual to model his values and behaviors after those of other persons. Parents are important identification models during an individual's early years. Other adults and peer groups may become influential models during childhood and adolescence.

Both psychoanalytic and learning theory formulations of the identification process give importance to the roles of nurturance and power (Bandura and Walters, 1963, Chapter 2). There is also experimental evidence to support the idea that the likelihood of a child's identifying with a parent is related to the extent to which the parent manifests characteristics related to nurturance and power. For example, Bandura and Huston (1961) found that warmth and friendliness toward a nursery school child by an adult model increased the probability of the child's imitating the model's behavior. In a later study, Bandura, Ross, and Ross (1963) demonstrated that a child tends to imitate the behavior of the model who is more powerful and thus more able to control desirable resources. P. Sears (1953), in studying the doll play of kindergarten age boys, found that boys whose fathers were warm and affectionate adopted the father role in play more frequently than boys whose fathers were cold and distant; if the father was emotionally distant but the mother was warm and

CG 006 927

affectionate, a mother role was adopted more frequently. Mussen and his collaborators (Payne and Mussen, 1956; Mussen and Distler, 1959, 1960; Mussen, 1961; Mussen and Rutherford, 1963) found that grade school and high school boys judged to be highly masculine viewed their fathers both as warm, nurturant, affectionate, and as possessing strength and the power to administer both rewards and punishments. There is also evidence that young college men from homes where the father is both powerful and loving are better sex-typed (more fundamentally masculine) than when the mother is the more powerful-loving figure (Moulton, et al., 1966).

It might be expected that the identification process, which is often in flux during childhood and adolescence, would have reached a more stable and crystallized state among young adults. One wonders whether the parental characteristics that seem important to the selection of identification figures in childhood and adolescence retain that importance in the adult. In the present study, preference of parental identification model in adult men is investigated as it relates to (1) which parent is perceived as creating a more intimate, nurturant, emotional climate and (2) which parent is perceived as more dominant or powerful in the family.

Method

Sample. The Ss were 75 male graduate students who were candidates for the doctorate in Psychology, History, or Educational Administration. Fourteen were enrolled at Michigan State University, the remainder at the University of Michigan. Their average age was 29.6 years.

Procedure. Each S participated in an individual interview, which was

tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The interview was composed of 72 specific questions which tapped the individual's perception of his relationship to his parents, the parents' relationship to each other, and the interests and involvements of family members outside the family unit. The investigator inquired into a response only if the S failed to answer a part of the question or if there was some ambivalence in the response.

Two coders were trained intensively on a facsimile interview. One coder coded 37 interviews and the other coded 38. In addition, 10 of these interviews were coded in common to obtain a measure of interjudge reliability. The percent of agreement for coders' judgments ranged between 90 and 100%.

There were five measures of emotional intimacy and four measures of dominance (see Table 1). In making judgments about these measures, coders used information gleaned both from direct inquiry regarding each measure and from responses to items dealing with related areas.

The decision concerning the S's primary identification figure was made on the basis of a two-fold criterion: (a) The S's self judgment as to which parent he felt most similar, and (b) a coder's judgment of identification figure based on a perusal of several relevant responses within the interview. Coder and subject agreement was .97. Coder's judgments took precedence in the two cases where there was not agreement.

Ss were divided into two groups: Those who were judged to be "similar to mother" (N=30) and those judged "similar to father" (N=45). Judgments regarding the emotional character of the parent-child relationship and regarding the S's perceptions of the parents with regard to dominance were examined in relation to judged identification figure, and the chi-square

test of independence was applied, using two-tailed tests of significance. Where appropriate, Yates' correction for continuity was employed.

Results

The results of the chi-square analyses are shown in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Three of the five measures of emotional intimacy were related significantly to judged identification figure. The three sub-dimensions reaching significance pertained specifically to the character of the parent-child relationship (i.e., the parent to whom the S was closest, the parent who was the S's confidant, and the parent to whom the S turned when in trouble). The two sub-dimensions that did not reach significance seemed to deal more with general characteristics of the parent (i.e., parent described as warmer, parent seen as more affectionate), than with qualities of the parent-child interaction.

As regards the four measures of dominance, identification figure chosen was significantly related to the S's view of the parent as more authoritative, dominant, and the one who made major decisions in the family. General effectiveness with people was not related significantly to identification model.

Discussion

This study differs from studies cited earlier in that the subjects are adults rather than children, and the data are based upon self-report rather than upon observations by parents or experimenters. The use of retrospective self-reporting embodies certain methodological hazards. It is difficult to know with any certainty the extent to which reports of childhood relationships reflect what actually occurred. However, to know an individual's subjective evaluation of the past may be as informative in determining influences on identification as knowledge of the objective reality. It is to be expected that memory will be distorted to some degree. However, a recent review of the literature in this area (Baugh, et al., 1970) suggests that although recollections of the past may be somewhat inaccurate they still play an important role in determining present behavior.

The data of this study underscore the persistent association of identification with nurturance and power characteristics. Adult subjects are judged similar to the parent they recall as having provided a closer emotional relationship. In like manner, adult subjects are judged to be similar to the parent who is remembered as being more dominant in the family. These findings are consistent with the results of studies of children, demonstrating that these retrospective data are basically congruent with data collected from direct observation for the variables under consideration and suggesting that nurturance and power characteristics retain their importance as determinants of identification model well into adult life.

Although nurturant behavior seems to foster identification regardless of model, the present data suggest that it exerts a greater influence on

identification when the mother is its source. When the data are subjected to specific comparisons, it can be seen that nurturant mothers are more likely to be chosen as identification models by their sons than are nurturant fathers. Conversely, the influence of dominance is increased when it is a characteristic of the father. Specific comparisons reveal that dominant fathers are more likely to be chosen as identification models by their sons than are dominant mothers. In contrast to children, adults seem to respond differentially to the sex of the identification model, which may reflect their internalization of culturally defined sex role behavior.

These data, when examined from the standpoint of learning theory, suggest that intimacy and dominance characteristics function as sex-related reinforcers of behavior in the child. In this view, dominance and intimacy may be used as sanctions that control behavior. Further, dominance and intimacy are used selectively according to the sex of the reinforcing agent. Thus, a mother who nurtures as a response to a particular style of behaving and a father who exercises his power in favor of a child when the child acts in a particular way may each be using the mode of reinforcement associated with his/her sex in our culture.

The present data also support the idea that, in order for model characteristics to influence identification, they must be an integral part of the parent-child interaction. This is illustrated by the subject who describes his mother as warm and affectionate, but has not necessarily experienced these qualities in their relationship, and therefore does not identify with her. In this case, intimacy did not function as a reinforcer in the parent-child relationship and identification was not fostered by this characteristic.

Similarly, a father can be perceived as being effective with people in general, but if he is not dominant in the relationship with his son, identification may not be facilitated.

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Table 1

Relation of Emotional Intimacy and Parental Dominance to Adult Identification

Measures of Emotional Intimacy	Subject Judged Similar to Mother	Subject Judged Similar to Father	x^2
S closer to Mother	25	22	9.128**
S closer to Father	5	23	
Mother described as warmer	24	32	.752
Father described as warmer	6	13	
Mother is S's confidant	27	21	14.670***
Father is S's confidant	3	24	
S turns to Mother when in trouble	25	27	4.609*
S turns to Father when in trouble	5	18	
Mother seen as more affectionate	23	32	.284
Father seen as more affectionate	7	13	

Measures of Parental Dominance	Subject Judged Similar to Mother	Subject Judged Similar to Father	x^2
Mother is seen as more effective with people	20	21	2.905
Father is seen as more effective with people	10	24	
Mother is seen as more authoritative	15	8	8.79**
Father is seen as more authoritative	15	37	
Mother described as dominant	17	14	4.848*
Father described as dominant	13	31	
Mother made major decisions	15	12	4.253*
Father made major decisions	15	33	

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$.